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By JOHN WESLEY.

1 Edition

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ADVERTISEMENT.

SOME Days ſince I was deſired to preach on this Text. I did ſo yeſterday morning. In the afternoon I was preſſed to write down and print my Sermon; if poſſible, before I left Cork. *I have wrote it this morning: But I muſt beg the Reader to make allowance for the diſadvantages I am under; as I have not here any Books to conſult, nor indeed any time to conſult them.*

Cork, May 8, 1775.

A SERMON

ON

1 JOHN, v. 7.

There are Three that bare record in Heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghoſt: and theſe Three are One.

1. WHATSOEVER the generality of people may think, it is certain that Opinion is not Religion: No, not Right Opinion, Aſſent to one, or to ten thouſand truths. There is a wide difference between them: Even Right Opinion

is

is as diſtant from Religion, as the Eaſt is from the Weſt. Perſons may be quite right in their Opinions, and yet have no Religion at all. And on the other hand, perſons may be truly religious who hold many wrong Opinions. Can any one poſſibly doubt of this, while there are *Romaniſts* in the world? For who can deny, not only that many of them formerly have been truly religious, (as *Thomas a Kempis*, *Gregory Lopez*, and the Marquis *de Renty*,) but that many of them, even at this day, are real, inward Chriſtians? And yet what an heap of erroneous Opinions do they hold, delivered by tradition from their Fathers? Nay, who can doubt of it, while there are *Calviniſts* in the world? Aſſertors of abſolute Predeſtination? For who will dare to affirm that none of theſe are truly religious men?

Not

Not only many of them in the laſt Century were burning and ſhining lights, but many of them are now real Chriſtians, loving GOD and all mankind. And yet what are all the abſurd opinions of all the *Romaniſts* in the world, compared to that one, That the GOD of love, the wiſe, juſt, merciful Father of the ſpirits of all fleſh, has from all eternity fixt an abſolute, unchangeable, irreſiſtible decree, that part of mankind ſhall be ſaved, do what they will, and the reſt damned, do what they can!

2. Hence we cannot but infer, that there are ten thouſand miſtakes, which may conſiſt with real Religion: With regard to which every candid, conſiderate man will think and let think. But there are ſome Truths more important than

others. It ſeems there are ſome which are of deep importance. I do not term them *fundamental* Truths; becauſe that is an ambiguous word: And hence there have been ſo many warm diſputes, about the number of *fundamentals*. But ſurely there are ſome, which it nearly concerns us to know, as having a cloſe connexion with vital Religion. And doubtleſs we may rank among theſe, that contained in the words above cited, *There are Three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghoſt, and theſe Three are One.*

3. I do not mean, that it is of importance, to believe this or that *Explication* of theſe words. I know not, that any well judging man would attempt to explain them at all. One of the beſt

tracts

tracts which that great man Mr. SWIFT ever wrote, was his Sermon upon the Trinity. Herein he ſhews, that all who endeavoured to explain it at all, have utterly loſt their way: Have above all other Perſons hurt the cauſe, which they intended to promote; having only, as *Job* ſpeaks, *darkened counſel, by words without knowledge.* It was in an evil hour, that theſe Explainers began their fruitleſs work. I inſiſt upon no explication at all; no, not even on the beſt I ever ſaw; I mean, that which is given us in the Creed commonly aſcribed to *Athanaſius.* I am far from ſaying, He who does not aſſent to this, "ſhall without doubt periſh everlaſtingly." For the ſake of that and another clauſe, I for ſome time ſcrupled ſubſcribing to that Creed: 'Till I conſidered, 1. That theſe

ſentences only *relate* to *wilful*, not involuntary Unbelievers: To thoſe who having all the means of knowing the Truth, nevertheleſs obſtinately reject it: 2. That they relate only to the *Subſtance* of the Doctrine there delivered; not the philoſophical *illuſtrations* of it.

4. I dare not inſiſt upon any one's uſing the word *Trinity*, or *Perſon*. I uſe them myſelf without any ſcruple, becauſe I know of none better. But if any man has any ſcruple concerning them, who ſhall conſtrain him to uſe them? I cannot; much leſs would I burn a man alive, and that with moiſt, green wood, for ſaying, "Tho' I believe the Father is GOD, the Son is GOD, and the Holy Ghoſt is GOD, yet I ſcruple uſing the words *Trinity* and *Perſons*, becauſe *I do* not

not find thoſe terms in the Bible." Theſe are the words which merciful *John Calvin* cites, as wrote by *Servetus* in a letter to himſelf. I would inſiſt only on the direct words unexplained, juſt as they lie in the text, *There are three that bear record in Heaven, The Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghoſt: And theſe three are one.*

5. " As they lie in the text"—But here ariſes a queſtion, Is that text genuine? Was it originally written by the Apoſtle, or inſerted in later ages? Many have doubted of this: And in particular, that great light of the Chriſtian Church, lately removed to the Church above, *Bengelius*, the moſt pious, the moſt judicious, and the moſt laborious, of all the modern Commentators on the new Teſtament. For ſome time he ſtood in doubt of its authenticity, becauſe it

is

is wanting in many of the antient Copies. But his doubts were removed by three conſiderations: 1. That tho' it is wanting in many Copies, yet it is found in more, and thoſe, Copies of the greateſt authority: 2. That it is cited by a whole train of antient Writers, from the time of St *John* to that of *Conſtantine*. This argument is concluſive: for they could not have cited it, had it not then been in the ſacred Canon. 3. That we can eaſily account for its being after that time wanting in many Copies, when we remember, that *Conſtantine*'s Succeſſor was a zealous Arian, who uſed every means to promote his bad cauſe, to ſpread Arianiſm throughout the Empire: In particular, the eraſing this text out of as many Copies as fell into his hands. And he ſo far prevailed, that the Age

in

in which he lived, is commonly ſtiled *Seculum Arianum*, the Arian Age: There being then only One eminent man, who oppoſed him at the peril of his life. So that it was a proverb, "*Athanaſius con-*" *tra mundum*;" Athanaſius againſt the world.

6. "But whatever becomes of the text, we cannot believe what we cannot comprehend. When therefore you require us to believe Myſteries, we pray you to have us excuſed."

Here is a two-fold miſtake. 1. We do not require you, to believe any Myſtery in this. But 2. You do already believe many things which you cannot comprehend.

To

To begin with the latter. You do already believe many things which you cannot comprehend. For you believe there is a *Sun* over your head. But, whether he ſtands ſtill in the midſt of his Syſtem, or not only revolves on his own axis, but *rejoiceth as a giant to run his courſe*; You cannot comprehend either one or the other, *How* he moves, or *how* he reſts: By what power, what natural, mechanical power, is he upheld in the fluid Ether? You cannot deny the fact: Yet you cannot account for it, ſo as to ſatisfy a rational Enquirer. You may indeed give us the Hypotheſis of *Ptolemy*, *Tycho Brahe*, *Copernicus*, and twenty more. I have read them over and over: I am ſick of them: I care not three ſtraws for them all.

" Each

" Each Solution but once more affords
New change of terms, and ſcaffolding of words:
In other garb my queſtion I receive,
And take my doubt the very ſame I " gave."

Still I inſiſt, The *fact* you believe: You cannot deny. But the *manner* you cannot comprehend.

8. You believe there is ſuch a thing as *light*, whether flowing from the Sun, or any other luminous body. But you cannot comprehend either its nature, or the manner wherein it flows. How does it move from Jupiter to the Earth in eight minutes, two hundred thouſand miles in a moment? How do the rays of the Candle brought into the room, inſtantly

diſperſe into every corner? Again. Here are three Candles, yet there is but one Light. Explain this, and I will explain the Three One God.

9. You believe there is ſuch a thing as *Air*. It both covers you as a garment, and

"Wide interfus'd
Embraces round this florid Earth."

But can you comprehend, How? Can you give me a ſatisfactory account of its Nature, or the cauſe of its Properties? Think only of One, its Elaſticity: Can you account for this? It may be owing to Electric Fire attached to each particle of it: It may not: And neither you nor I can tell. But if we will not breathe it, 'till we can comprehend

prehend it, our life is very near its period.

10. You believe there is ſuch a thing as *Earth*. Here, you fix your foot upon it. You are ſupported by it? But do you comprehend what it is that ſupports the Earth? "O, an Elephant, ſays a *Malabarian* Philoſopher: And a Bull ſupports Him." But what ſupports the Bull? The *Indian* and the *Briton* are equally at a loſs for an anſwer. We know it is GOD that *ſpreadeth the North over the empty ſpace, and hangeth the Earth upon nothing*. This is the fact. But how? Who can account for this? Perhaps Angelic, but not Human Creatures.

I know what is plauſibly ſaid concerning the powers of Projection and Attraction. But ſpin as fine as we can, matter of fact ſweeps away our Cobweb Hypotheſis. Connect the force of Projection and Attraction how you can, they will never produce a Circular Motion. The moment the projected Steel comes within the Attraction of the Magnet, it does not form a Curve, but drop down.

11. You believe you have a *Soul*. "Hold there, ſays the Doctor: * I believe no ſuch thing. If *you* have an immaterial Soul, ſo have the Brutes too." I will not quarrel with any that think they have; Nay, I wiſh he could prove

* Dr. *Bl—r* in his late tract.

it.

it. And ſurely I would rather allow *them* ſouls, than I wou'd give up my own. In this I cordially concur in the ſentiment of the honeſt Heathen, "*Si erro, libenter erro; & me redargui valde recuſem.*" If I err, I err willingly; and I vehemently refuſe to be convinced of it. And I truſt moſt of thoſe who do not believe a Trinity, are of the ſame mind. Permit me then to go on. You believe you have a ſoul connected with this houſe of clay. But can you comprehend how? What are the ties that unite the heavenly flame with the earthly clod? You underſtand juſt nothing of the matter. So it is: But how, none can tell.

12. You ſurely believe, You have a *Body*, together with your Soul, and that each

each is dependent on the other. Run only a thorn into your hand: Immediately pain is felt in your Soul. On the other ſide, is Shame felt in your Soul? Inſtantly a Bluſh overſpreads your Cheek. Does the Soul feel fear or violent Anger? Preſently the body trembles. Theſe alſo are facts which you cannot deny: Nor can you account for them.

13. I bring but one inſtance more. At the command of your Soul, your Hand is lifted up. But who is able to account for this? For the connexion between the Act of the Mind, and the outward actions. Nay, who can account for *Muſcular Motion* at all, in any inſtance of it whatever? When one of the moſt ingenious Phyſicians in *England* had

finiſhed

finiſhed his Lecture upon that head, he added,—— "Now, Gentlemen, I have told you all the diſcoveries of our enlightened Age. And now, if you underſtand one jot of the matter, you underſtand more than I do."

The ſhort of the matter is this. Thoſe who will not believe any thing but what they can comprehend, muſt not believe, that there is a *Sun* in the firmament, that there is *Light* ſhining around them, that there is *Air*, tho' it incompaſſes them on every ſide, that there is any *Earth*, tho' they ſtand upon it. They muſt not believe that they have a *Soul*, no, nor that they have a *Body*.

14. But, Secondly, as ſtrange as it may

may ſeem, in requiring you to believe, *There are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghoſt; and theſe Three are One:* You are not required to believe any Myſtery. Nay, that great and good man, Dr. *Peter Browne*, ſometime Biſhop of *Cork*, has proved at large, that the Bible does not require you to believe any myſtery at all. The Bible barely requires you, to believe ſuch *facts*, not the manner of them. Now the Myſtery does not lie in the *fact*, but altogether in the *manner*.

For inſtance. *GOD ſaid, Let there be Light, and there was light.* I believe it: I believe the plain *fact:* there is no myſtery at all in this. The myſtery

lies

lies in the *manner* of it. But of this I believe nothing at all; nor does God require it of me.

Again. *The word was made fleſh.* I believe this fact alſo. There is no myſtery in it: But as to the *manner*, *how* he was made fleſh, wherein the myſtery lies, I know nothing about it, I believe nothing about it. It is no more the object of my Faith, than it is of my Underſtanding.

15. To apply this to the caſe before us. *There are three that bear record in Heaven—And theſe three are one.* I believe this *fact* alſo, (if I may uſe the expreſſion) That God is Three and One. But the *manner*, *How*, I do not comprehend: And

I do not believe it. Now in this, in the *manner*, lies the myſtery: And ſo it may; I have no concern with it. It is no object of my faith; I believe juſt ſo much as GOD has revealed, and no more. But this, the *manner* he has not revealed: therefore I believe nothing about it. But would it not be abſurd in me, to deny the fact, becauſe I do not underſtand the manner? That is, to reject *what GOD has revealed*, becauſe I do not comprehend *what he has not revealed?*

16. This is a point much to be obſerved. There are many things *which eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.* Part of theſe GOD hath *revealed*

vealed to us by his Spirit: *Revealed*, that is, unveiled, uncovered: That part he requires us to believe. Part of them he has not revealed: That we need not, and indeed cannot believe; it is far above, out of our ſight.

Now where is the wiſdom of rejecting what is revealed, becauſe we do not underſtand what is not revealed? Of denying the *fact*, which GOD has unveiled, becauſe we cannot ſee the *manner*, which is veiled ſtill?

17. Eſpecially when we conſider that what GOD has been pleaſed to reveal upon this head, is far from being a point of indifference, is a truth of the laſt importance. It enters into the very heart of

Chriſtianity: it lies at the root of all vital religion.

Unleſs theſe three are one, how can *all men honour the Son, even as they honour the Father?* "I know not what to do, ſays *Socinus* in a letter to his friend, with my untoward followers. They will not worſhip JESUS CHRIST. I tell them, it is written, *Let all the Angels of GOD worſhip him.* They anſwer, However that be, if he is not GOD, we dare not worſhip him. For *it is written, Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy* GOD, *and him only ſhalt thou ſerve.*"

But the thing which I here particularly mean is this; The knowledge of the three-one GOD, is interwoven with all

all true Chriſtian Faith, with all vital Religion.

I do not ſay, that every real Chriſtian can ſay with the Marquis *de Renty*, "I bear about with me continually an experimental verity, and a plenitude of the preſence of the ever bleſſed Trinity." I apprehend this is not the experience of *Babes*, but rather *Fathers in Chriſt*.

But I know not how any one can be a Chriſtian Believer, 'till he *hath* (as St. *John* ſpeaks) *the witneſs in himſelf:* 'till *the Spirit* of GOD *witneſſes with his ſpirit, that he is a child of GOD:* that is, in effect, 'till GOD the Holy Ghoſt witneſſes that GOD the Father has accepted him, 'thro' the merits of GOD the Son;

Son; and having this witneſs, he honours the Son, and the bleſſed Spirit, *even as he honours the Father.*

18. Not that every Chriſtian Believer *adverts* to this; perhaps at firſt not one in twenty; But if you aſk any of them a few queſtions, you will eaſily find, it is implied in what he believes.

Therefore I do not ſee how it is poſſible for any to have vital Religion, who denies that theſe three are one. And all my hope for them is, not that they will be ſaved, during their unbelief, (unleſs on the footing of honeſt Heathens, upon the plea of invincible ignorance)

norance) but that GOD, before they go hence, will *bring them to the knowledge of the Truth.*

FINIS.

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